



# Bill Wilson Center News

Counseling - Housing - Education - Advocacy

## Dear Friends,

After 30 years in youth and family services I have seen many shifts in funding priorities for services. Every few years the pendulum swings from intervention services to prevention and then back again. When funding is tight, unfortunately prevention services are eliminated because the long-term benefits are harder to substantiate. We are a society of



instant gratification and we want positive outcomes now. So, funding for our prevention services have been following the current public funding swing away from prevention.

One such trend is the current movement toward ending chronic homelessness in ten years. While it is a noble goal to move the hardcore homeless into permanent housing it is also shortsighted to do it to the detriment of other parts of the continuum of care. Unless we also provide prevention and early intervention services such as transitional housing to youth and emergency housing to battered women we are only swinging the pendulum to one side rather than striking a balance for both needy populations. Youth aging out of foster care who cannot find transitional housing will become the chronic homeless adult in ten years.

Developing plans to end chronic homelessness is being driven by the federal government, which seems to believe that this could really be accomplished. As long as there are youth exiting foster care without being prepared to be self-sufficient, women who are fleeing domestic violence in their homes,

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## Reuniting Families

There has been a growing trend towards agencies focusing on Family Preservation Services. These services provide families whose children are at risk of being placed in foster care or are already in foster care with reunification services.

Bill Wilson Center has been providing family preservation services since 1977 when the agency opened its Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter. Bill Wilson Center has always believed that youth should be with their families unless it is unsafe to do so.

Angela's story is one example of Bill Wilson Center's family preservation model. Angela fell head over heels in love with 17-year-old Javier at the tender age of 13. She was sure that this was the boy of her dreams and that they would get married. Angela's parents were naturally protective and forbid Angela from seeing Javier.

Defying her parents, Angela began sneaking out to meet with Javier. One night Angela was picked up for violating San Jose's 10:00 PM curfew. Because Angela's parents weren't home, the officer could have taken her to Juvenile Hall. Fortunately, he decided it would be better to bring her to Bill Wilson Center's Youth Shelter.

Bill Wilson Center staff contacted



Angela's parents, and they collectively decided that it was in Angela's best interest to stay at Bill Wilson's shelter until the family's conflicts could be worked out. While Angela was at the shelter she and her family participated in intensive family counseling sessions. They worked through their issues until Angela was ready to be reunited with her family and return home.

Angela stopped seeing Javier who had been abusive. She continues to live at home and is now a sophomore in high school. She and her family return for family counseling as needed.

Of the 243 youth who stayed in Bill Wilson Center's Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter last year, 82% were reunited with their families. If a youth cannot return home to their parents, Bill Wilson Center will seek out a member of their extended family who is willing to take the child in. Children need to be raised by families whenever possible. Foster care is a last resort.

"I am happy to see that other agencies are starting to focus on family reunification," said Bill Wilson Center's Executive Director, Sparky Harlan. "For the past 28 years, placing youth back with family members has proven to be the most successful solution."

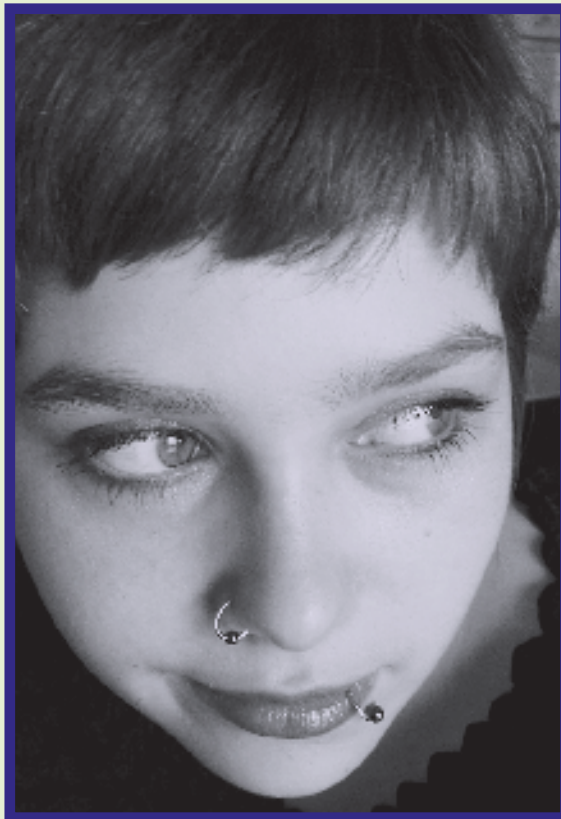
## **No one fails at Bill Wilson Center**

**"I** had given up everything," said Diana. "I had lost all connections with my friends and family."

Instead Diana found a new family on the streets - other kids who didn't care if she used drugs. When Diana first came to Bill Wilson Center's Drop-In Center for homeless youth, she was just looking for a place to get some free food and clothes. But she ended up finding much more than that.

"Every visit I would talk with the staff and they would ask me about my plans for the future," said Diana. "My future wasn't something I ever thought about. But the more I did think about it, the more I realized that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life on the streets."

Diana was ready to get clean and sober, and Bill Wilson Center helped connect her with a residential drug



*"For once in my life I was accepted unconditionally"*

rehabilitation program. Diana worked very hard and after three months left the program clean and sober. But Diana ended up back on the streets and eventually began using again.

"I came back to the Drop-In Center," said Diana. "I was scared they would turn me away, but instead they welcomed me back. Every other program I had been in had conditions that I had to meet. But Bill Wilson Center never gave up on me. The staff has always been there for me."

Bill Wilson Center refuses to let a youth fail. If a youth leaves a program, they can always come back. If they are not succeeding in one program, we will try and find a program where they will succeed. We never give up on a youth.

Bill Wilson Center's "No Fail" policy is one of the agency's guiding principles. It's also what makes the agency's programs so successful.

"For once in my life I was accepted unconditionally," said Diana.

"Everyone else had turned their back on me or had given up. It made me want to succeed - to prove that investing in me was worth it."

Diana eventually moved from the streets into Bill Wilson Center's Transitional Housing Program. Diana is now living in her own apartment and working as a case manager in a substance abuse program. She lives every day clean and sober.

## **Save the Date for Cirque du Soleil!**

Cirque du Soleil is back in San Jose this coming January 2006 with a new show, Corteo. We are thrilled that Cirque du Soleil has donated tickets to Bill Wilson Center once again - our night is Friday, January 20, 2006 and we'll be selling our tickets (which are Category I) for \$100. Check out their website to see what great seats these are!

Treat yourself and your family. These tickets also make great gifts for birthdays, anniversaries or the holidays - perhaps that hard-to-buy-for aunt would enjoy a special evening. Talk with your company about buying a block of tickets. Companies have used these as thank you gifts for staff, as motivational awards, or to entertain a client - or a potential one. Everyone loves Cirque du Soleil!

If you've never been to a Cirque du Soleil show, you have missed a truly unique experience. These shows are simply indescribable to anyone who has not attended. If you've seen a Cirque du Soleil show before, you'll want to see Corteo - each show is just amazing.

Cirque du Soleil lives their commitment to youth at risk. Their commitment springs from their own experiences as street performers. We are very appreciative of their support for the work we do here at Bill Wilson Center.

All the proceeds from our ticket sales support Bill Wilson Center programs. Call Judy Whittier at 408-850-6132 to reserve your tickets today. Have fun and support Bill Wilson Center!

# Bill Wilson Center Peer Education Training

Congratulations to Spring 2005 Peer Education Training graduates! The program provides high school age youth with 30 hours of skill building workshops. These workshops address a variety of subjects including communications, assertiveness, conflict resolution, decision-making, healthy relationships, substance abuse and gang prevention. After completing the program, participants return to their schools and communities to begin their work helping their peers.

The Peer Education Planning Committee, which consists of graduates of the program, takes a leadership role by developing program curriculum and presenting several of the workshops. These youth are responsible for the logistics of the training, recruiting youth from area high schools and creating a vision for future trainings.

One of the wonderful things that happen during this program is that youth from all different schools and backgrounds share an experience, listen to each other,

and learn to value the perspective that each youth brings. The combination of skill building and adding knowledge about issues of importance to youth provides each teen with the tools to help their peers.

The Peer Education Training is open to all high school youth ages 13-18. Training dates for Fall 2005 will be posted online soon. Check Bill Wilson Center's website at [www.billwilsoncenter.org](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org) for updates!

## Sparky's Letter from page 1

and people living on the margin who become unemployed, we will always have homeless people in our community. Can we reduce chronic homelessness? Of course, but it will take more than a plan to house the current chronically homeless. It will take the prevention and early intervention work to help avoid the first step into homelessness.

Bill Wilson Center will continue to work with other programs to coordinate services for youth and families at risk of homelessness as well as the chronic homeless. Rather than shifting funding away from proven prevention programs we need to be creative and raise new funds for the ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness. We must continue to prevent homelessness in the first place - not simply react after the fact.

Yours truly,



## Building Dreams with Your Help

On April 27th, Bill Wilson Center hosted its first annual Building Dreams fundraising luncheon with 235 people in attendance. The event was a great success and raised over \$140,000 in donations and five-year pledges.

Bill Wilson Center's Executive Director Sparky Harlan spoke to the audience about the agency's guiding principles. "Bill Wilson Center has a 'No Fail' policy," she said. "If a youth is not succeeding, we do not give up. We keep working until we find the right solution." (see article on page 2)

Ms. Harlan also went on to talk about the future of Bill Wilson Center. "There is so much more we can do," she said. "With more resources, we can expand our services to help even more people."

A video featuring three past Bill Wilson Center clients followed, and invited the audience to experience the personal hardships and struggles our clients face.

One of the youth in the film talked about how he was kicked out of his foster home on the same day he graduated from high school. He shared his struggle of studying for his college classes while living on the streets.

After the video another client spoke about her experience of escaping an abusive home and how her life changed when she came to Bill Wilson Center. Now a proud mother of four wonderful teenage girls and a business owner, she wanted everyone to know that Bill Wilson Center's investment in her had paid off.

Special thanks to all the generous attendees, table captains, Comerica Bank, the Wyndham, JumpCutters, and Greenworks.

If you missed out on this year's event, we invite you to join us for Building Dreams 2006. We also offer tours of Bill Wilson Center. If you would like to attend please contact Kathie Sheehy at (408) 820-6129.

# When tragedy strikes, we are here to help

When a 16-year-old boy committed suicide at home while his parents were at work, not only was it a tragic loss for his family, but a greater community of people were also affected. The boy was a popular student at his high school and had many friends. His loss had a tremendous impact on friends, classmates, and teachers.

## SHOP to support Bill Wilson Center

Do you love to shop? Do you love saving money!? Well then, **Macy's Passport In-Store** event is just for you! Once a year Macy's hosts a fashion extravaganza which includes free samples, raffle prizes, and best of all HUGE sales.

Passport In Store will be held at Macy's in Valley Fair, San Francisco's Union Square Store, and Marin's Corte Madera Store on Friday and Saturday, **September 23 and 24, 2005.**

Purchase a \$10 ticket NOW from Bill Wilson Center and receive 10-20% off all regular priced, sale, and clearance merchandise all day throughout the store as well as samplings from event sponsors, the chance to win a \$1,000 shopping spree and much more! Tickets are good all day, both days. Bill Wilson Center receives 100% of the ticket sales proceeds!

### Get tickets now! Here's how:

**Visit Bill Wilson Center** and purchase tickets from the front desk. Bill Wilson Center's main office is located at 3490 The Alameda, Santa Clara, 95050.

### Send a check to Bill Wilson Center.

Please indicate the number of tickets and an address to mail the tickets to. Send checks to: Bill Wilson Center, Attn: Macy's Passport, 3490 The Alameda, Santa Clara, CA 95050.

**Contact Amy Purdum** at (408) 850-6156 or email [apurdum@billwilsoncenter.org](mailto:apurdum@billwilsoncenter.org) to make special arrangements for ticket transactions, or charge your purchase by phone!

The principal of his school knew that outside help was needed, and from past experience, she knew who to call – the Centre for Living With Dying. “The Centre was like an angel that descended when we needed them the most. At a time when none of us could think clearly because of our own grief, we had knowledgeable, caring people telling us the appropriate steps and helping us complete them.”

The Centre responded immediately to the principal call. The day of the suicide, Centre staff met with the principal, teachers and other staff to help them cope with the tragedy. They also helped to formulate a plan to notify students and their parents. The next day six staff and volunteers from the Centre went to each classroom to notify students of the suicide and to provide support services.

“We let each student know that we were available if they needed us,” said Marilyn Walker, Director of the Centre for Living With Dying. “The next day we invited students to attend a special group to help them deal with their loss.”

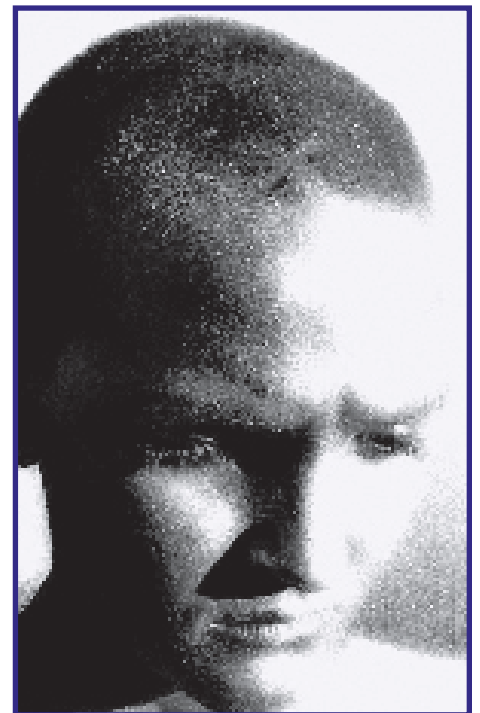
Students who chose to attend the group walked into a large room to find walls covered with big sheets of paper. Each student was given a pen and asked to fill the pages with something about the deceased student. Afterwards the warm messages were given to the grieving parents.

“We still return to the school to help students who were strongly affected by the suicide,” said Marilyn. “We'll return to the school for as long as they need us.”

Schools may not have the resources to effectively meet the mental health needs of multiple students in the wake of a critical incident, especially one that occurs on the school campus. The first hour after an incident – before the Centre staff and volunteers arrive – can be crucial.

A recent grant from the City of San Jose Healthy Neighborhood Venture Fund will address this need by allowing us to train school personnel in grief support so they will be better prepared to support students and families after a critical incident has occurred; educate parents to help them identify when their child is suffering from trauma related stress and to know what they can do to help their child; provide support groups for youth exhibiting warning signs (truancy, changes in academic interest, isolation, behavior problems); and provide individual and/or family grief counseling when needed.

The Centre for Living with Dying became a part of Bill Wilson Center in August 2004.



# Counting the Homeless

Sean hoists himself up into a large hole that has been cut into the underside of a freeway overpass. Inside opens into a large cave-like space that acts as a shelter for Sean and other homeless youth like himself.

"You'd be surprised how warm it can get in here," says Sean. "A bunch of us sleep in here where we're safe."

Sean is just one of many homeless youth on the streets of Santa Clara County. This winter, the Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey Project Committee undertook the job of conducting a count of homeless people in Santa Clara County.

Bill Wilson Center served as one of the stations where hundreds of volunteers gathered in the wee hours of the morning to get assignments and head out to conduct the street count. Homeless people were hired to help with the count and it was their expertise in locating other homeless people that helped create a realistic snapshot of our county's homeless population. Outreach workers from Bill Wilson Center's Drop-In Center and youth from our programs participated in the count to help ensure the homeless youth population was not overlooked.

7,646 homeless individuals in shelters and on the streets were identified in the point-in-time count. Surveys completed as part of the census indicate the homeless population turns over 2.66 time in a year. It is estimated that 20,318 persons in the County were homeless some time during 2004. 267 youth were counted in the street count, and 190 youth were counted in the shelter count totaling 457 homeless youth. These numbers do not include people who "couch-surf" with friends or those in inadequate housing.

"You have to know the size of the problem before you can craft a plan to resolve it", said Nishtha Jolly, Bill Wilson Center's liaison to the County of Santa Clara 10-year Planning Committee. With the results of the homeless count, a task force put together a 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness in Santa Clara County. The County plans to achieve this goal by:

1. Preventing its occurrence.
2. Providing permanent housing with access to treatment, services and income to facilitate long-term housing retention.
3. Engaging chronically unhoused people to use services and housing.
4. Accessing income supports and housing.
5. Establishing an infrastructure to ensure success.
6. Engaging the entire community.

A key element of the plan is to address issues of discharge planning from the many systems where people fall through the cracks and into homelessness. For example, national studies of youth in foster care have shown that nearly two-thirds of these youth end up on public assistance within 18 months of emancipation. In Santa Clara County about 60% of youth on the streets have previously been in foster care. "Foster youth aging out of the social service system often become an invisible part of the homeless population," said Nishtha Jolly. "They tend to be severely under-represented in the homeless census. As a member of the task force, I wanted to make sure that they are not forgotten and that we plan for services unique to their needs."



# Be A Bill Wilson Center Volunteer!

If you are interested in contributing your time, partner with Bill Wilson Center. Volunteers are provided training and ongoing support. Quarterly meetings include all Bill Wilson Center volunteers. Examples of volunteer opportunities include:

**Street Youth Supporter:** Work in our Drop-In Center for street youth by helping out with food preparation, linking youth with available resources and building positive bonds. Weekday shifts and Saturday afternoon needed.

**ILP Facilitator:** Work with foster youth one-on-one to develop independent living skills to prepare youth for when they leave the foster care system.

**Telephone Counselors:** Volunteers are needed to staff crisis lines, which are staffed 24-hours by trained volunteers who offer support in times of crisis, stability in times of confusion, empathy in times of pain, and referrals in time of need.

**Grief Counselor:** Volunteers in the Centre for Living With Dying program provide one-on-one support to individuals who are going through the grieving process. Volunteers take part in a thorough training in order to provide a client with the support they need.

**Community Outreach:** Help us to get the word out in the community about the services provided by Bill Wilson Center by staffing a booth at community events, and distributing brochures.

## Steps to become a Bill Wilson Center volunteer

1. Call Victor Garza, Volunteer Coordinator, at 408-850-6138, to begin the process to become a volunteer.
2. Attend volunteer orientation. The next volunteer orientation date is Thursday, July 21st, 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm. Check Bill Wilson Center's website for future dates
3. Complete a volunteer application, including finger print check and a personal interview.
4. Participate in volunteer training. The next volunteer training series begins on Thursday, August 4th.
5. Select a volunteer assignment and join us!

## **Volunteer Diane Sandvig Recognized by Junior League**

On April 22nd, Bill Wilson Center volunteer, Diane Sandvig, was recognized as an exceptional volunteer by Junior League of San Jose at its 36th annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. Diane was one of seventeen recipients selected as Crystal Bowl winners. More than 100 volunteers were nominated.

“Over the years Diane has not only spent a tremendous amount of her time here at the Drop-In Center, but also in the community letting people know about Bill Wilson Center and what’s happening with homeless youth in our area,” says Christine McNulty Grant, Drop-In Center Coordinator.

Diane Sandvig has been a volunteer at Bill Wilson Center’s Drop-In Center for homeless youth for five years. She contributes a tremendous amount to the program and to the agency. It’s volunteers like Diane that make our programs even stronger.

## **Join us for the Walk for AIDS**



Join the Bill Wilson Center team for the 2005 Walk for AIDS on Sunday, October 16th! For further information about our team, or if you would like to register for the Walk, please contact Victor Garza at (408) 850-6138 or email

vgarza@billwilsoncenter.org. According to the CDC, between 1999 and 2003, the proportion of young people with a diagnosis of AIDS increased. In 1999, 3.9% of all persons with a diagnosis of AIDS were aged 13-24. In 2003, 4.7% were aged 13-24. Get pledges and join us at the Walk so we can provide more prevention education for youth.

## **Apply now to join the Fall 2005 Safe Place Community Outreach team!**

Meet new people, earn community service hours, and have the opportunity to really make a difference!

Safe Place Community Outreach (SPCO) is a group of teens that provide leadership through community action.



SPCO members live in San Jose and are between the ages of 12-17. They organize their own efforts to deliver the Safe Place message, which is that no one has to be in trouble and alone; there is always someone to call. SPCO members provide community service in their own neighborhoods.

SPCO members work in teams, select their own leaders,

and plan community service projects. They have monthly meetings with guest speakers, team building activities, and opportunities to become a leader.

SPCO is a big commitment, with even bigger rewards. Students earn 20-30 hours of community service, which they may need for graduation or to enhance their application. They earn \$50 upon successful completion of SPCO requirements and the one youth who shows exceptional leadership earns up to \$150! Participants will make new friends, learn more about themselves and feel good about the difference they make in the lives of others.

### **Here’s what some members have to say about SPCO:**

“I felt like I made a difference.”

“I learned how to talk in front of people. Now I know you don’t have to be the best to be a leader, you just have to be you.”

In past years SPCO has organized a carnival for homeless kids, hosted a poster contest for Safe Place, gave radio interviews about Safe Place, and conducted two successful Bowl-A-Thon fundraisers.

**The 2005 Fall Semester Application is now online. Go to [www.billwilsoncenter.org/](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org/) SPCO for details!**

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3490 The Alameda  
Santa Clara, CA 95050

## New Ways to Support Bill Wilson Center!

We now have a variety of ways to help Bill Wilson Center. Details and links to the following giving avenues can be found at [www.billwilsoncenter.org/donors](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org/donors).

### Online Donations

Now donating online is easier than ever. Go to Bill Wilson Center's website at [www.billwilsoncenter.org/donors](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org/donors) and find the link to Network for Good's secure website. You will be directly linked to BWC's giving web page and given easy to follow, step-by-step instructions on how to give online. Bill Wilson Center will receive notice of your contribution and send you a thank you letter which will also document your donation for tax purposes.

### Donate Your Car

Donate For Charity arranges for free vehicle pickup, handles all the DMV issues, sells the vehicle at auction, and distributes the net proceeds to Bill Wilson Center. So if it's time to replace an older car, or if you have a boat and trailer that are just taking up space in the garage, consider making a donation. You'll avoid the headache of selling a used vehicle and receive a receipt entitling you to a tax deduction if you itemize. When you're ready to donate, simply call Donate For Charity toll-free at (866) 392-4483 or online at [www](http://www).

[donateforcharity.com](http://donateforcharity.com). Just let them know it is for Bill Wilson Center

### Shop Online at iGive.com

Do you shop online? Well you can shop and support Bill Wilson Center. By shopping through iGive.com purchases will benefit Bill Wilson Center. There is no cost or obligation to you! The percentage of your purchase that will go to Bill Wilson Center varies by merchant, but is clearly stated upfront - and you are getting the regular website prices - there's no markup to you! Buy everything from books to clothing to music to flowers to pet supplies from well-known merchants like Lands End, Eddie Bauer, Expedia, Barnes & Noble, Gap, Target, QVC, Best Buy, BOSE, Office Depot, and Dell - there are over 600 merchants on iGive.com. To sign-up go to [www.iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com).

### Bill Wilson Center's Wish List

You can view Bill Wilson Center's Wish List online to see what items we need, including toiletries, socks, games, and gift certificates. If you have items to donate please take a look at our wish list by going to [www.billwilsoncenter.org/wishlist](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org/wishlist). If you'd like to donate any item on this list, please give Jeanne-Ann Pine a call at 408-850-6155 to make arrangements.

Thank you !

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